



Invasive Pests: Emerald Ash Borers & Unscrupulous Tree Care Services

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MADISON – The threat of emerald ash borers (EAB) destroying your trees is a troubling thought. Shady businesses may try to use this fear to get you to buy expensive treatments or agree to tree removal services. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) reminds Wisconsin residents to take the time to make an informed decision before agreeing to anything.

“Be skeptical of companies going door to door with high-pressure sales pitches,” says Sandy Chalmers, Division Administrator of Trade and Consumer Protection. “Before you spend money, take time to determine whether your tree is infested and whether the treatment is warranted.”

With the discovery of EAB in parts of Wisconsin this summer, there is a heightened sense of awareness and concern for ash trees. Because of the drought, many trees appear to be in poor health. Unscrupulous tree care or lawn maintenance companies are using that to their own advantage.

“Most tree care businesses in the state are legitimate, but we have heard reports of people going door to door telling property owners their trees are infested or that immediate treatment is critical,” said Chalmers. “Some companies tell residents that EAB is already in their neighborhood, even though the closest infestation is several counties removed.”

If you’ve been told that your ash is infested with EAB and have been given an estimate for treatment or removal of the tree, you may want to:

- Check the Wisconsin EAB Program website (www.emeraldashborer.wi.gov). EAB has been found in only a handful of locations in Wisconsin. The map of known locations on the website is always current. Do your homework on the various products available to treat EAB.
- Call a local, reputable tree care company and compare estimates.
- Check credentials. A business license doesn’t necessarily mean extensive knowledge of trees or tree health. A business applying a chemical treatment must have a current DATCP pesticide applicator’s license and certification.
- Be wary of any contractor who knocks at your door. Call the police or sheriff’s department to check them out. See if the business has registered with the municipality and carries appropriate credentials.
- Get a written contract that states exactly what work is to be done and what materials are to be used. Never rely on a verbal commitment.
- Request a copy of the contractor’s certificate of liability insurance.
- Call the state’s Consumer Information Hotline (800-422-7128) to see if there are significant complaints on file against the company, especially one that shows up at your door without prior contact.

“An EAB hotline (800-462-2803) is available to Wisconsin homeowners who suspect the presence of these pests on their properties,” added John Petty, Division Administrator of Agricultural Resource Management. “The hotline gets residents in touch with an EAB specialist who can provide guidance and helpful information for their particular situations.”

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